TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

2025 Winter Maintenance Program Review Update

Date: November 3, 2025
To: Executive Committee
From: City Manager
Wards: All

SUMMARY

In response to challenges experienced with winter maintenance operations during the February 2025 major snow events, City Council directed the City Manager to review the City's Winter Maintenance Program, identify opportunities for improvement, and undertake a forensic audit of the procurement for the existing winter maintenance contracts. Municipal VU Consulting Inc. (MVU) was engaged to conduct the winter maintenance program review, and the Internal Audit Division was tasked with the procurement review. The interim results of both reviews were reported to City Council at its July 23 and 24, 2025 meeting, where Council directed the City Manager to continue working with MVU to develop a Major Snow Event Response Plan with a city-wide all hands on deck emergency approach, refine other opportunities for improvement, and to engage a third party to conduct a forensic audit on the winter maintenance procurement given the fraud risk identified by the Internal Audit Division.

MVU's *2025 Winter Storm Response and Winter Maintenance Program Review* identified 32 opportunities for improvement, which have since been refined into 11 recommendations for immediate, mid-term and long-term implementation. This report provides an update on new and enhanced initiatives planned for the 2025–2026 winter season, highlighting several actions that align with or support elements of MVU's 11 recommendations – such as the removal of 311 service request hold periods, surge planning, and development of a Major Snow Event Response Plan – as well as updates on the status of nine outstanding Auditor General recommendations that had not been fully implemented and three new Auditor General recommendations from June 2025.

Development of the Major Snow Event Response Plan will be finalized following the completion of the tabletop testing which will be scheduled shortly, with the following key components to strengthen the City's winter resilience:

- A scalable, city-wide response with escalation triggers, mapped routes, and clearly defined roles.

- Activation of the Emergency Operations Centre for a coordinated city-wide response with an embedded communications plan.
- Snow removal using a combination of contracted, in-house, and surge resources, including enhanced parking enforcement and towing support.
- Designating additional road segments as snow routes, as recommended in this report, and improving signage.

Staff have begun implementing a range of initiatives to strengthen winter maintenance operations for the 2025–2026 and future winter seasons, including:

- Eliminating the temporary hold period on 311 winter service requests.
- Strengthening quality monitoring and reporting to better monitor contractor performance.
- Improved in-house fleet readiness by procuring additional equipment, testing alternative models of sidewalk clearing equipment, expanding technician availability with mobile responsiveness in the field, and providing additional staff training for major snow events.
- Enhancing proactive snow removal to better manage snow at high-priority locations with limited storage capacity.
- Establishing a year-round Winter Services Unit to focus on operational preparedness, contract management, and continuous improvement.
- Improving the City's winter communications strategy for both typical and extreme weather events.

MVU developed and analyzed snow removal contract models, which have estimated annual costs of up to $130 million. Given Toronto's climate – where major snowstorms of sufficient scale to trigger full removal operations do not occur every winter – this report does not recommend engaging in specific snow removal models due to the cost. Instead, when snow removal is required in the remaining years of the existing winter maintenance contracts, the City will utilize existing resources (contracted and in-house) with improvements in place that strengthen performance and operational readiness in combination with surge resources. Up to an additional 200 support staff and 75 pieces of equipment (e.g., dump trucks, loaders, skid steers) from across City divisions is available to be redeployed to assist with a major snow event response. It is expected that incremental program improvements will be realized each year going forward. During the remaining contract years, lessons learned will inform the development of the future winter maintenance contracts. The implementation of previous and new Auditor General recommendations is ongoing, with a focus on contract oversight, operational preparedness, procedure updates, and performance monitoring. Enhanced field audits and data-driven tools will help identify potential service issues and verify equipment use, supporting consistent, accountable, and continuously improving winter maintenance operations.

The externally led forensic audit of the winter maintenance procurement and award process has progressed significantly, with the final report expected at the December 2025 meeting of City Council. The findings of this audit will also inform the procurement of future winter maintenance contracts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council direct the General Manager, Transportation Services, to report to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on the effectiveness of improvements made to the Winter Maintenance Program in the 2025-2026 season resulting from the Program Review.
2. City Council approve the amendments to the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 950-1316A, Schedule XVIIA, Parking and Standing During Major Snow Storm Conditions and Chapter 950-1316B, XVIIB, Parking/Standing on or Blocking Streetcar Tracks during Major Snow Storm Conditions, as generally described in Attachment 2 to the report (November 3, 2025) from the City Manager.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Implementation of initiatives to strengthen 2025-2026 winter maintenance operations such as eliminating the 311 hold period, strengthening monitoring and reporting of contractor performance, enhancing proactive snow removal, improving in-house fleet readiness, and refreshing the City's winter communications strategy will be managed within existing budgets.

The establishment of the Winter and Seasonal Services Section, which includes the dedicated Winter Services Unit, will require 18 additional staff positions (10 new and 8 existing to be repurposed) at an estimated cost of $1.3 million for which funding will be considered within Transportation Services' Operating Budget through the 2026 Budget process.

Work on the development of the remaining MVU recommendations is ongoing. Staff will continue to work with MVU on the Major Snow Event Response Plan (MSERP) which includes the surge, towing, and snow removal frameworks. The current cost estimate for snow removal modelled by MVU range in costs of up to $130 million, for which there is no additional funding available within the City's Operating Budget. Any enhancements to the winter maintenance program will be considered in a future budget process.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact statement.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 23 and 24, 2025, City Council considered together EX25.5 - 2025 Winter Maintenance Program Review and AU9.6 - 2025 Winter Maintenance Program Follow-Up: Status of Auditor General's Previous Recommendations. Council adopted the City Manager's Report with further amendments and directed the City Manager to report back to the Executive Committee on November 4, 2025.

https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EX25.5

At its meeting on March 26 and 27, 2025, City Council considered EX21.1 - Review of Toronto's Winter Maintenance Program that was adopted with amendments by the Executive Committee on March 19, 2025. Council adopted the report with further amendments and directed the City Manager to report back to the Executive Committee on the work outlined in parts 1 to 5 of Council's decision.

https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EX21.1

At its meeting on July 24 and 25, 2024, City Council considered IE15.3 - Annual Winter Maintenance Report which established the vision and guiding principles for a major snow event response. Council adopted the report and confirmed updated service levels.

https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE15.3

COMMENTS

Background

With climate change contributing to more frequent and severe winter storms, Toronto continues to face evolving challenges in maintaining safe and accessible roads, sidewalks, and cycling routes during extreme weather. Recent major snow events — including those in February 2025 and prior years — have underscored the importance of a response plan built on strong coordination, effective communication, and operational readiness to manage large-scale snow accumulation across the city.

Following the February 2025 major snow events, the City undertook operations to remove snow from over 362 km of roads, 288 km of sidewalks, and 42 km of bikeways, in addition to bridges, school bus loading zones, and transit stops. While the operation was completed faster than during the 2022 major storm event and ahead of the initial

three-week estimate, it nonetheless fell short of public and Council expectations for the speed and effectiveness of cleanup activities and communications.

Improvements Beginning in the 2025-2026 Winter Season

Building on lessons learned from the February 2025 major snow events, as well as opportunities identified by MVU, staff have begun implementing a range of initiatives to strengthen winter maintenance operations beginning in the 2025–2026 season. These improvements are summarized in Attachment 1.

Discontinuation of 311 Service Request Hold Periods

Traditionally, at the onset of a winter event, a short 311 “hold period” has been in place during which new service requests for activities such as salting or snow plowing could not be submitted, except for urgent or safety-related escalations from emergency services, the TTC, or residents with critical access needs. This allowed winter operations crews to focus on active deployments in an efficient manner. During this time, Customer Experience Division (CXD) disabled winter service requests on self-service channels (web and mobile app), activated caller messaging to advise of the temporary hold, and, when agents spoke to a caller, informed them that operations are still underway. E-update emails were also sent to subscribers of City winter operation alerts. The hold was lifted once the majority of activations have been completed.

Although the hold periods have supported operational efficiency, they have also frustrated residents and Councillors, who often receive increased calls when 311 cannot accept winter service requests.

At the direction of Council, beginning with the 2025 - 2026 Winter Season, the 311 hold period will be discontinued, allowing residents to submit winter maintenance service requests at any time. This change will improve Transportation Services’ situational awareness during a winter event, however, it will also increase overall request volumes, as well as duplicate or overlapping reports during active salting and plowing operations that require timely triage and resolution. Transportation services will continue to work closely with CXD to manage these efficiently.

For the upcoming winter season, Transportation Services has implemented several improvements to handle service requests during a winter event. For example, leveraging new and existing system tools to triage and prioritize incoming service requests, ensuring the highest priority issues are addressed first, as well as a new dashboard to identify duplicate service requests for coordinated responses. Transportation Services has also established a new, centralized Divisional Communications Centre (DCC) to work in coordination with the Divisional Operations Centre, CXD, Communications Division and Toronto’s Emergency Operations Centre to provide and share real-time situational updates. Staff will also be redeployed as needed to conduct field inspections. Councillors will be able to escalate issues directly to the DCC.

In addition to these enhancements, CXD is exploring opportunities to increase staffing during winter events to help manage higher call volumes and maintain reasonable customer wait times. As this is the first season without the hold on winter maintenance service requests, both Transportation Services and CXD will actively monitor and refine processes to support a smooth transition and maintain a positive customer experience.

The City has also engaged an external consultant to work with Transportation Services, CXD, and the Communications Division to review the end-to-end winter maintenance service request process and make further recommendations to improve the process and ensure that requests are logged, triaged and responded to within the defined service standards.

Strengthened Monitoring

Transportation Services is strengthening its quality monitoring and reporting framework to improve accountability and performance oversight during winter operations. By combining enhanced digital tools and on-the-ground verification, the ability to track service delivery and ensure standards are consistently met will be improved.

GPS Dashboard

As noted in past Auditor General reports, the GPS dashboard – designed to support real-time exception reporting and strengthen verification of contractor performance – has experienced performance issues that have limited its reliability since its launch in 2023. Challenges include inconsistent data processing and slow refresh speeds.

Fleet Services, in collaboration with Transportation Services and the Technology Services Division, continues to work with the GPS service provider to refine the dashboard for reliable, real-time monitoring of both contracted and in-house routes. Enhancements, expected by December 2025, will support real-time, data-informed performance management, ensuring service standards are met and verified through accurate data. The system will be field-tested throughout the winter season to validate performance and inform further refinements.

Enhanced Field Verification

As recommended by the Auditor General, Transportation Services is extending the segments of infrastructure assessed during Field Audits and leveraging 311 data to identify locations with high concentrations of service requests. Enhanced oversight will help ensure Field Audit Forms are completed consistently and accurately.

Transportation Services is also working with the Technology Services Division to enable Field Audit Forms to be completed through the Maximo Mobile App, which will include mandatory fields that must be filled out before submission. A pilot of this new functionality is anticipated to begin in December 2025 to test performance and identify any issues before broader rollout. In addition, Traffic Monitoring Cameras will be used, where available, to verify service completion in real time, providing an immediate visual

check on contractor performance. Hills along bus routes will also be monitored to determine if additional service is required during winter events.

Together, the GPS dashboard and enhanced field verification tools will strengthen Transportation Services' capability to accurately track service delivery and identify performance issues in real time.

Proactive Snow Removal

Transportation Services is strengthening proactive snow removal to maintain safe and passable roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and bridge decks, while preserving snow storage capacity for future winter events. Traditionally, snow removal has been triggered when snow piles are causing blockages or storage is at capacity, resulting in reactive operations. Lessons from the 2024–2025 winter season, including the February 2025 major snow events, have highlighted the benefits of acting earlier.

Under the proactive approach, snow removal will now be initiated – primarily by in-house staff and equipment and supplemented by contractors – after 8 cm has accumulated at high-priority locations where limited snow storage capacity could impact safety, transit, or emergency services. Targeted removal will focus on areas where:

- Snow storage capacity is limited.
- Snowbanks could encroach on vehicle or bike lanes as well as streetcar routes.
- Sightlines at intersections or curbs may be restricted.

By addressing accumulations promptly, crews can keep storage areas available for subsequent snowfalls and avoid the challenges of large, hardened piles. Updated snow removal maps, informed by lessons learned from the past winter season, will ensure resources are deployed efficiently to maintain safe and accessible transportation networks throughout the winter. This proactive strategy not only improves operational efficiency but also enhances service for residents by keeping roads, sidewalks, and transit routes clear sooner, reducing delays and improving safety during and after snow events.

Winter Services Unit

In the past, winter operations in Toronto have been managed as a seasonal function, with planning and preparation ramping up each fall and winding down in the spring. MVU's review identified an opportunity to strengthen the City's winter maintenance program through the creation of a dedicated, year-round Winter Services Unit within Transportation Services. This approach recognizes that effective winter readiness is not limited to the winter season; ongoing planning, training, mapping, and operational preparedness throughout the year are essential to ensure a timely, coordinated, and effective response when winter events occur.

The new Winter Services Unit will provide year-round focus on winter service delivery, improving operational preparedness, strengthening accountability, and improving

management of winter maintenance contracts. The Unit will also coordinate with other City Divisions and external agencies such as the TTC, Toronto Parking Authority (TPA), and Toronto Police Service (TPS). Key responsibilities include contract development and management, staff training, operational planning, mapping and analysis of winter service performance, and continuous improvement of winter operations. For the 2025–2026 winter season, the Unit includes two new leadership positions – a Manager and a Director – supported by 11 existing staff roles that will be permanently transferred to the Unit.

In addition to establishing the dedicated Winter Services Unit, Transportation Services is restructuring its Operations and Maintenance Section to strengthen support for winter operations while maintaining effective delivery of non-winter programs. The section will be divided into two: one focused on winter and seasonal services, providing an integrated structure to manage both winter and other seasonal operations (e.g., sweeping and cleaning, pothole repairs); and the other focused on maintenance activities (e.g., signs and markings, electrical maintenance, permanent infrastructure maintenance and delivery) as well as planning and preparing contracts for programs such as road resurfacing.

Within the Winter and Seasonal Services section, the Winter Services Unit will be staffed year-round to focus exclusively on winter operations, including contractor oversight, performance monitoring, and operational readiness. The remaining staff in this section will focus on winter operations during the winter season and on seasonal programs such as sweeping, pothole repair, and other maintenance activities during non-winter months. This structure enhances the City's capacity to respond to winter events and ensures consistent service delivery throughout the year.

In the Maintenance and Delivery Services Section, this restructuring will allow staff, particularly the Contract Development, Delivery, and Inspection Unit, to focus year-round on planning, preparing, and delivering contracts (e.g., local road resurfacing, sidewalk repair).

To fully implement this structure, 18 staff positions are required – ten new and eight repurposed from existing roles – at an estimated cost of $1.3 million. Funding for the new positions has been included in Transportation Services' 2026 Operating Budget submission. These additional staff are required to strengthen contractor performance monitoring, proactively identify issues in the field, and to ensure timely response to the expected increase in service requests.

These organizational changes establish a stronger foundation for year-round planning, coordination, and continuous improvement, ensuring the City is better positioned to deliver reliable and efficient winter and non-winter services.

<u>In-House Fleet Readiness</u>

Following a comprehensive review of the 2024–2025 winter operations, the Fleet Services Division (FSD) identified challenges arising from snow accumulation that exceeded the operating capacity of the current sidewalk fleet during the February 2025 major snow event. This resulted in extended equipment repairs, reduced fleet availability during successive snow events, and increased demands for after-hours maintenance coverage. The performance of mechanical sidewalk plows, which received widespread media attention, further highlighted the need for more capable equipment with improved reliability and extended hours of maintenance support.

In response, FSD is implementing a series of measures to support winter operations. New equipment will be available this season, including new pilot models of more powerful sidewalk plows, new loaders, blowers and snow melter rentals, to provide additional capacity for snow removal for the 2025–2026 winter season, as summarized in Table 1. These acquisitions ensure the City's in-house fleet remains in a state of good repair, incorporates new technologies, and can meet operational demands, including surge capacity during major snow events.

Table 1: Winter Operations In-House Fleet (Snow Removal): 2024-2025 vs 2025-2026

Equipment Type	2024–2025 Fleet	2025–2026 Fleet
Front End Loaders	21	27
Skid Steers	10	10
Sidewalk Plows	59	64
Tractors	15	15
Snow Blowers	16	28
Snow Melters	3	5
Dump Trucks	28	28

To improve maintenance responsiveness, FSD is introducing mobile technicians who will perform on-site diagnostics and repairs when feasible during snow events, reducing downtime and minimizing operational disruptions. Extended hours of operation at maintenance garages will be provided during major snow events, increasing in-house capacity to support maintenance demands on the winter equipment throughout a storm. Fleet staff training is also being enhanced, with additional equipment operator and technician training ahead of the winter season.

Together, these initiatives will strengthen fleet readiness, reduce downtime, and support the delivery of timely, efficient, and safe winter operations citywide.

Winter Communications Strategy

In past winters, Transportation Services provided pre-season briefings for Members of Council and their staff, distributed an annually updated Winter Services Guide, and issued multiple daily operational updates during winter events.

Building on MVU's recommendations to improve communications for major snow events, staff have taken a more comprehensive approach that strengthens the messaging for both typical and extreme winter weather. The Communications Division has developed a new winter communications strategy designed to provide timely, accurate, and accessible information to the public and Members of Council. The Communications Division will now serve as the primary spokespersons, ensuring consistent and coordinated messaging, and allowing Transportation Services staff to focus on operational response during winter events.

A new centralized winter section on the City's website will provide clear, near real-time information on winter operations, digital tools, and services residents may need during the winter (e.g. warming centres, preparing for emergencies). Members of Council will continue to receive pre-season briefings, as well as regular updates informed by feedback from Councillor surveys conducted by the Communications Division and MVU. The Communications Division will lead a Communications Working Group of City Divisions and external partners that will coordinate messaging, share updates, and explore innovative ways to amplify key information. The Communications Division will provide CXD (311 Toronto) with clear, consistent messaging for use across all customer-facing touchpoints, including automated greetings, social media replies, and online service request updates.

Extreme winter weather events require a more urgent and coordinated communications response. The Communications Division is creating materials to ensure residents and businesses receive clear, practical guidance they can act on, including information on snow routes, emergency preparedness, and service changes. Messaging will focus on results rather than effort, and updates will be delivered consistently to Members of Council, with supporting visuals and materials provided for their communications.

To continuously improve, a full end-of-season evaluation will be conducted in April 2026 to assess effectiveness of communications and refine future strategies.

MVU Recommendations and Implementation Plan

Since their July 2025 report, MVU has refined the 32 previously identified opportunities for improvement into 11 overarching recommendations (see Table 2), for which implementation plans have been developed and are presented in the *2025 Winter Storm Response and Winter Maintenance Program Review: Recommendations and Implementation Plan* (Attachment 4). As noted earlier in this report, several of the recommendations are already in the process of implementation.

Table 2: Refined Winter Maintenance Recommendations

#	Recommendation	Status
1A	Develop and Implement a Robust Major Snow Event Response Plan	Completed by December 2025

#	Recommendation	Status
1B	Develop a Snow Removal Framework and Readiness	Completed by December 2025
1C	Develop a Surge Plan and Readiness	Completed by December 2025
1D	Develop a Towing Plan and Readiness	Completed by December 2025
2	Refine 311 Protocols for Major Snow Events	Completed by December 2025
3A	Communicate Significant Weather Events as Emergencies	Complete
3B	Communicate Results Rather than Effort	Complete
3C	Improve Consistency of Councillor Communications	Completed by December 2025
4	Improve Quality Monitoring, Tools, and Deficiency Reporting	Ongoing this season and future seasons
5	Negotiate Improvements with Current Contracts	Ongoing this season
6	Identify and Prepare Improvements for Future Winter Maintenance Contracts (2029)	Ongoing this season and future seasons
7A	Improve Public Notifications of Parking Restrictions	Ongoing this season
7B	Enhance Parking Bylaws	Ongoing this season and future seasons
8A	Strategize Starting Times for Sidewalk Plowing	Complete
8B	Explore Alternate Options for Sidewalk Clearing Equipment	Ongoing this season
8C	Increase Spares for Sidewalk Clearing Equipment	Complete
9	Develop Winter Maintenance Best Practices for Infrastructure	Ongoing this season and future seasons
10A	Conduct a Depot Rationalization and Snow Dump Site Study	Future seasons
10B	Improve Operability and Procure New Melting Technology	Ongoing this season and future seasons
11	Establish a Dedicated Winter Services Unit	Complete

All recommendations are discussed in detail in MVU's report; this report focuses on those identified for immediate implementation following City Council's July 2025 meeting.

Major Snow Event Response Plan (MSERP)

Council prioritized the implementation of the Major Snow Event Response Plan (MSERP) and related initiatives, directing the City Manager to continue working with MVU to increase the City's readiness for future major events. Along with other 2025-2026 winter season improvements noted earlier, the MSERP is being developed in preparation for the upcoming season.

Key stakeholders – including the Senior Leadership Team and senior staff from Transportation Services, the Communications Division, Toronto Emergency

Management (TEM), Fleet Services and multiple other divisions across service areas and various agencies (e.g., TTC, TPS, TPA) – are providing input through structured workshops, presentations, and meetings. With this cross-divisional and inter-agency collaboration, the MSERP will be refined for activation during major snow events.

During a major snow event, coordination will be managed through the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to support information flow and resource allocation. The MSERP will establish formal roles and responsibilities under an integrated Incident Management approach, defining operational, supervisory, communications, and escalation roles for each phase of an event.

The MSERP will be scalable, with escalation triggers, mapped routes, and clearly defined activation criteria guiding EOC operations, snow clearing and removal, parking prohibitions, inter-agency services (including TTC and Emergency and Shelter Support Services), and communications. The General Manager, Transportation Services, will initiate the activation of the MSERP. The final draft will be tested via a tabletop exercise in November 2025, and in early December 2025, training will be conducted for staff responsible for activating and carrying out the plan.

Strategic Timing for Sidewalk Clearing

During the February 2025 major snow events, challenges were experienced maintaining clear sidewalks. Because the City begins sidewalk clearing at 2 cm of snow accumulation but does not start road plowing until 8 cm, snow was pushed back from roads onto sidewalks that had already been cleared. MVU has recommended that, during major snow events, the City adopt a coordinated approach whereby road and cycling infrastructure plowing occurs prior to sidewalk plowing to prevent sidewalks from being re-buried by windrows, with the goal of improving overall efficiency and long-term accessibility during major snow events. MVU, together with Transportation Services, will be attending the December 2025 meeting of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee to present this approach.

Surge Plan and Readiness

During the February 2025 major snow event, approximately 50 staff in total were redeployed from Toronto Water and Solid Waste Management Services to assist with snow clearing, including equipment operation and manual clearing on steps, walkways, and overpasses. A formal redeployment framework did not exist to guide or scale this kind of assistance during major snow events. In addition, there is no formal process in place to access additional equipment (e.g., loaders, dump trucks) from the contractor industry when needed.

To better prepare for major snow events moving forward, a comprehensive surge plan is being developed and will be finalized in December 2025. The surge plan will define the additional internal staff and equipment resources needed based on activation triggers indicating escalating operational requirements. Staff have initiated the planning

and will seek input from other City Divisions and unions to facilitate implementation, ensuring an all-hands-on-deck approach.

Additional support staff will be needed to assist with the storm response. Identified roles and skill sets include:

- Staff with inspection and supervision experience
- Staff who can assist with following up on service requests
- Staff to support hand clearing operations
- Staff to assist with door-to-door communications in local neighborhoods, advising residents to move vehicles ahead of snow removal crews.

There are up to 200 support staff who could be made available for cross-divisional support in a major snow event response. The plan will outline clear activation procedures for expedited deployment, which will be tested prior to finalization. Identified City staff will receive training on their roles and responsibilities for redeployment by December 2025.

Transportation Services is working to define the equipment and staff resources needed to support major snow event response, and to assess internal availability across City divisions. For example, the City has approximately 220 medium- to heavy-duty dump trucks and over 100 rubber-tire backhoes and loaders. If roughly 25% of these could be redeployed during a major storm, an additional 50 dump trucks and 20–25 pieces of heavy equipment could be made available. Staff will continue refining availability and mechanisms to access these resources while ensuring regular operations continue.

In consultation with the Purchasing and Materials Management Division, the surge plan will also explore opportunities to secure additional equipment and operators externally.

Managing Parked Vehicles During Winter Operations

Both legally and illegally parked cars significantly impede snow removal operations, forcing crews to navigate around vehicles, slowing progress, and leaving behind windrows.

When a Major Snowstorm Condition and Significant Weather Event declaration is in effect, parking on roads designated as snow routes is prohibited, and vehicles are subject to tagging and towing. Based on lessons learned from the February 2025 major snow event, Transportation Services has reviewed existing snow route locations and recommends designating eight additional road segments as major snow routes, as provided in Attachment 2.

Additional snow route signage is being installed along major snow routes, with streetcar routes prioritized. The signs have been updated with a new design to improve visibility and compliance, with over 1,500 installed to date. The new signs include yellow

graphics showing a vehicle being towed, providing a stronger visual deterrent. An image of the updated design is provided in Attachment 3. These measures are intended to support more effective snow clearing operations and improve compliance with snow route restrictions citywide.

As part of the MSERP, a towing framework will enhance the use of TPS towing contracts through improved coordination with TPS Parking Enforcement (TPE), potentially including rapid relocation of vehicles from snow routes. Consultation with TPE and their towing contractors will take place to discuss surge requirements during major snow events. Transportation Services is also exploring the use of Traffic Agents to complement parking enforcement alongside TPE Officers, including issuing parking tickets during major snow events.

Close collaboration with the TPA will take place during major snow events. The TPA will disable payments for parking along designated snow routes, with the Green P app providing pop-up notifications about parking restrictions. Stickers will also be applied on pay-and-display machines to reinforce that parking is prohibited. In addition, the City and TPA are reviewing the feasibility of providing residents living on streets with permit parking a placard allowing temporary free parking at nearby TPA lots before and during snow removal operations.

Snow Removal

MVU developed and compared a range of models for snow removal services that differed in whether equipment and haulage services were retained under dedicated contracts or integrated within existing arrangements. Options with fully dedicated resources offered the fastest clean-up and the highest level of service reliability, but at the highest cost, including substantial standby expenditures. Models that separated haulage or relied partly on existing agreements reduced costs substantially while maintaining similar completion times. Overall, total estimated costs for the options ranged in value up to $130 million.

Given Toronto’s climate – where major snowstorms of sufficient scale to trigger full removal operations do not occur every winter – these options are not recommended. Rather the City will build on the resources and experience already available through expanded in-house capacity and existing contractors, together with the improvements outlined earlier in this report, including the MSERP. This will support more efficient and effective snow removal compared to February 2025, while avoiding stand-alone snow removal contracts and the associated standby costs, ensuring better value for money by not paying for resources that may not be needed in milder winters.

Over the 2025–2026 season and the remaining years of the existing contracts, this transitional period will be used to monitor operational outcomes, assess equipment and staffing capacity, and gather lessons learned that will inform the design and procurement of future contracts for a fully integrated winter maintenance model with an

appropriate level of snow removal, further informed by the findings of the ongoing forensic audit of the current contracts' procurement.

Implementation of Auditor General Recommendations

In June 2025, the Auditor General issued a follow-up report on the status of previous recommendations to strengthen the delivery, oversight, and management of winter maintenance contracts. The report found that nine recommendations had not yet been fully implemented, and an additional three were issued, bringing the total to 12.

Transportation Services continues to advance implementation of all recommendations. Three outstanding recommendations relate to the use of GPS data and automated tools to strengthen contract performance monitoring, payment verification, and quality assurance. Implementation of these recommendations is linked to enhancements of the GPS dashboard, which is expected to be operational by December 2025 and tested throughout the winter season.

Work is also underway to update standard operating procedures, streamline field audit and documentation processes, enhance staff training, and refine performance metrics to better evaluate service delivery outcomes. Data-driven tools are being improved to identify potential service issues through the analysis of operational data, including 311 service requests.

A complete update on the implementation status of each remaining recommendation is provided in Attachment 5.

Next Steps

Improvements for this and future winter seasons will continue to be implemented as staff work with MVU to refine and operationalize the Major Snow Event Response Plan and implement surge and towing frameworks. During this season, staff will also continue to implement the Auditor General recommendations to strengthen accountability, oversight, and performance monitoring of winter maintenance operations.

Staff will begin designing and preparing the next generation of winter maintenance contracts, laying the groundwork for a more integrated, accountable, and efficient service model that positions Toronto to respond to future major snow events with enhanced capacity and resilience.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Improvements for 2025-2026 Winter Season
Attachment 2: Major Snow Route Updates
Attachment 3: Updated Snow Route Sign Design
Attachment 4: 2025 Winter Storm Response and Winter Maintenance Program Review: Recommendations and Implementation Plan
Attachment 5: Update on Implementation of Auditor General Recommendations

Attachment 1 – Improvements for 2025-2026 Winter Season

Improvement	Expected Outcome
Discontinuation of 311 Service Request Hold Period	• Reduced frustration from the public and Members of Council. • Earlier identification of problem areas. • Effective response to the increased volume of service requests received from CXD, through the establishment of Transportation Services' new Divisional Communications Centre (DCC).
Strengthened Monitoring	• Enhanced accountability and performance oversight of contractors through refinement of the GPS Dashboard for reliable real-time monitoring, expected by December 2025, improving the ability to track service delivery. • Verification of service completion in real time using traffic monitoring cameras, where available. • Identification of areas requiring additional service by monitoring hills along bus routes.
Proactive Snow Removal	• Initiation of snow removal after an 8 cm accumulation at high-priority locations with limited snow storage capacity, reducing risks to safety, transit, and emergency services. • Targeted clearing in areas where snowbanks could encroach on vehicle or bike lanes, streetcar routes, or obstruct sightlines at intersections and curbs. • Preservation of snow storage capacity to maintain readiness for future winter events.
Winter Services Unit	• A dedicated year-round unit focused on improved operational preparedness, mapping, accountability for winter service delivery, management of contracts, and coordination with other divisions and agencies. • Increased operational preparedness through ongoing planning, training, and mapping, supporting a timely, coordinated, and effective response to winter events.
In-House Fleet Readiness	• Enhanced snow removal capacity through piloting more powerful sidewalk plows and procuring additional equipment, including loaders, blowers, and other snow removal equipment. • Improved equipment availability and reliability through preventative maintenance, deployment of mobile technicians, extended garage hours, and strengthened maintenance training.
Winter Communications Strategy	• Communications Division will oversee timely, consistent updates and messaging for the public and Members of Council during all weather events, emphasizing outcomes over effort. • Coordinated communications plan providing operational updates, public education, and real-time information.

Attachment 2 – Major Snow Route Updates

To Be Rescinded:

Chapter 950 - 1316A – Schedule XVIIA – Parking and Standing During Major Snow Storm Conditions

Highway	Between
Beth Nealson Drive	Wicksteed Avenue and Overlea Boulevard
Donlands Avenue	Danforth Avenue and a point 38.9 metres north of Milverton Boulevard
Greenwood Avenue	Queen Street East and a point 34.6 metres north of Milverton Boulevard
Lakeshore Boulevard	Humber River and Forty Second Street
Lower Sherbourne Street	Front Street East and Queens Way East
Moore Avenue	A point 115 metres east of Hudson Drive and Astor Avenue
Richmond Street East	Yonge Street and Church Street
Richmond Street West	Spadina Avenue and Yonge Street
Southvale Drive	Astor Avenue and Millwood Road
Spadina Road	St. Clair Avenue West and Bloor Street West
Yonge Street	St. Clair Avenue West and Brooke Avenue

Chapter 950 – 1316B – Schedule XVIIB – Parking/Standing on or Blocking Streetcar Tracks during Major Snow Storm Conditions

Highway	Between
Emdaabiimok Avenue	Eastern Avenue and Queen Street East

To Be Enacted:

Chapter 950 - 1316A – Schedule XVIIA – Parking and Standing During Major Snow Storm Conditions

Highway	Between
Beth Nealson Drive	Pat Moore Drive and Wicksteed Avenue
Danforth Avenue	Main Street and Dawes Road
Donlands Avenue	A point 30.5 metres north of Milverton Boulevard and Danforth Avenue
Dupont Street	Bathurst Street and Lansdowne Avenue
Eglinton Avenue East	Laird Drive and Midland Avenue
Finch Avenue West	Weston Road and Dufferin Street

Greenwood Avenue	Queen Street East and point 30.5 metres north of Milverton Boulevard
Kingston Road	Midland Avenue and Eglinton Avenue
Lake Shore Boulevard West	Humber River and Forty Second Street
Lower Sherbourne Street	Front Street East and Queens Quay East
Moore Avenue	Welland Avenue and Mallory Crescent
Parkside Drive	Bloor Street West and Lake Shore Boulevard West
Sheppard Avenue East	Yonge Street and Yorkland Road
Southvale Drive	Mallory Crescent and Millwood Road
Spadina Road	Austin Terrace and St. Clair Avenue West
Spadina Road	Bloor Street West and Davenport Road
Thorncliffe Park Drive	Overlea Boulevard and Pat Moore Drive
Yonge Street	Hendon Avenue/Bishop Avenue and Lord Seaton Road

Attachment 3 – Updated Snow Route Sign Design